

Pharasmanes IV

(r. 406 - 409)

BRIEFING

P'arsman IV (Georgian: ფარსმან IV, sometimes Latinized as *Pharasmanes*), of the Chosroid Dynasty, was the king (*mepe*) of Iberia (Kartli, eastern Georgia) from 406 to 409.

According to the medieval Georgian chronicles, he was the son of King Varaz-Bakur II and the daughter of Trdat of Iberia. Characterized as a pious monarch and an exceptional warrior, he is reported to have rebelled against the Iranian hegemony and have withheld paying tribute to the shah. He is also credited with the construction of Bolnisi.

P'arsman is identified by some scholars with the Pharasmanes of the Syriac *Vita Petri Iberi* who was a brother of Osdukhtia, the paternal grandmother of Peter the Iberian, a well-known Georgian theologian and one of the leaders of anti-Chalcedonian movement in the Eastern Roman Empire. Pharasmanes enjoyed a leading position at the Roman court and held the rank of a *magister militum* under Emperor Arcadius until being accused of committing adultery with the empress Eudoxia. He escaped back to Iberia where he became king and encouraged the White Huns to attack the Roman frontiers. He was succeeded by his brother, Mhrdat.

BIOGRAPHY

The main historical sources about the life of Farsman IV are the collection of medieval Georgian chronicles “Kartlis Tskhovreba” and the life of Saint Peter Iver, written by John Rufus around the year 500.

According to Georgian chronicles, Pharsmanes IV was the son of King Varaz-Bakur III and his first wife, an unknown noblewoman of Iberia. When his father died in 394, Pharsmanes and his half-brother Mirdat were still young children. Therefore, the Iberian throne was assumed by their relative Trdat, who gave his predecessor's sons to be raised by the *eristavi* of Samshvild.

The Life of Peter Iver reports that Pharsmanes IV was a close relative of the saint, the brother of his paternal grandmother. Brought to Constantinople at a young age, Pharsmanes soon achieved a prominent position at the court of the Byzantine Emperor Arcadius, receiving the position of *magister militum*. However, accused of adultery with Empress Aelia Eudoxia, he was forced to flee back to Iberia. There, with the aid of the White Huns, after the death of Trdat in 406, Pharsmanes himself ascended the royal throne. Subsequently, in revenge for his exile, he repeatedly encouraged his allies to attack the borderlands of the Byzantine Empire.

Chronicles describe King Pharsmanes IV as a magnanimous and fearless monarch, during whose reign Iberia was a prosperous country, free from external enemies. Considering his power sufficiently strong, the new king refused to pay tribute to Sassanid Iran, imposed during the reign of his father, Varaz-Bakur II. Pharsmanes also engaged in active construction activities: he restored all Christian churches in Iberia and ordered the construction of a new church in Bolnisi.

King Pharsmanes IV died in 409 after a reign of three years. His brother Mirdates IV became the new monarch of Iberia.